The Architect of Iranian Narratives: Seyed Mohammad Marandi and the Geopolitics of the 2026 Iran-US War

Douglas C. Youvan

doug@youvan.com

www.youvan.ai

April 16, 2026

Seyed Mohammad Marandi has emerged as the most critical intellectual voice for the Islamic Republic of Iran during the escalating global crisis of 2026. Born in the United States and educated in the United Kingdom, Marandi occupies a unique position as a bridge between the ideological framework of the Iranian establishment and the global media landscape. His career spans decades of academic rigor in the fields of English literature and Orientalism, yet his most significant impact has been felt on the front lines of narrative warfare. During the 2026 conflict, Marandi's role transitioned from a commentator to a pivotal advisor during the Islamabad negotiations, where he articulated Tehran's uncompromising 10-Point Plan. This paper examines Marandi's background, starting from his formative years as a volunteer soldier in the Iran-Iraq War to his current status as a primary strategist in Iran's public diplomacy. By analyzing his media interventions and his academic critiques of Western hegemony, this study explores how Marandi has redefined the concept of resistance for a global audience, positioning Iran not as a isolated state, but as a central player in a shifting world order that increasingly looks toward the Global South.

Keywords: Seyed Mohammad Marandi, Iran-US War 2026, Islamabad Negotiations, Public Diplomacy, Orientalism, Axis of Resistance, Strategic Communication, Middle East Security, 10-Point Plan, Geopolitical Analysis.

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1. Introduction: The Intellectual Front of the 2026 Conflict

The 2026 Iran-US War has redefined the parameters of modern warfare, moving beyond the traditional kinetic exchange of missiles and naval blockades into the sophisticated realm of global narrative management. In this high-stakes environment, the struggle for international legitimacy is as critical as the military maneuvers in the Strait of Hormuz. Central to Iran's strategy in this cognitive theater is Seyed Mohammad Marandi, a figure who has transcended his academic roots to become the preeminent intellectual front for the Islamic Republic. As the conflict escalated from the devastating February 2026 airstrikes to the fragile diplomatic opening in Islamabad, Marandi has functioned as the primary architect of the Iranian narrative, meticulously deconstructing Western diplomatic rhetoric while articulating a vision of defiant sovereignty that resonates across the Global South.

Marandi's role during the 2026 crisis is unique in the history of Iranian public diplomacy. Unlike traditional bureaucratic spokespersons, he possesses a rare combination of Western cultural fluency and deep-seated revolutionary conviction. This allows him to navigate the hostile waters of international media outlets with a precision that few in the Tehran establishment can replicate. By framing the Islamabad negotiations not as a desperate search for peace but as a calculated demonstration of American duplicity, Marandi has successfully managed the expectations of both domestic and international audiences. He has positioned the Iranian leadership's 10-Point Plan as the only viable path toward regional stability, effectively shifting the burden of failure onto the United States and its allies.

This paper provides a comprehensive analysis of Marandi's background, ideological formation, and his pivotal contributions to the current geopolitical standoff. It argues that his influence is not merely rhetorical but strategic, serving as a critical bridge between the IRGC's military posturing and the foreign ministry's diplomatic initiatives. Through an examination of his media interventions during the 2026 ceasefire and his long-standing academic critiques of Orientalism, this study explores how Marandi has helped forge a new model of resistance. In doing so, he has helped ensure that even as Iran faces unprecedented external pressure and a tightening naval blockade, its intellectual and ideological foundations remain not only intact but increasingly influential in the shifting global order of the late 2020s.

2. From Virginia to Tehran: The Construction of a Dual Identity

The biographical trajectory of Seyed Mohammad Marandi begins not in the halls of the University of Tehran, but in the suburbs of the American South and Midwest. Born on May 14, 1966, in Richmond, Virginia, Marandi's early life was defined by the typical markers of an American upbringing during the late 1960s and 1970s. His family's presence in the United States

was the result of political exile; his father, Alireza Marandi, was a physician who had been imprisoned by the Pahlavi regime for his political activism and eventually fled to America to continue his medical studies just weeks before Mohammad's birth. For the first six years of his life, Richmond served as the backdrop for a childhood that was culturally American, a period followed by a move to Dayton, Ohio, where the family settled in an upscale neighborhood. In these formative years, Marandi was deeply immersed in American culture, famously identifying as a dedicated fan of the Dallas Cowboys and participating in the social fabric of a mid-century American suburb.

However, this immersion was not without its complications. Marandi has frequently reflected on the subtle and overt forms of exclusion he experienced as a child of Middle Eastern descent in a predominantly white, wealthy neighborhood. Despite his fluency in the language and his embrace of American pastimes, he recalls a persistent sense of being an outsider, an experience that likely sowed the early seeds of his later critiques of Western social hierarchies. This dual existence—being culturally American yet ethnically and religiously "othered"—created a complex psychological foundation. It provided him with an intimate, "insider" understanding of the American psyche while simultaneously maintaining a critical distance that would characterize his professional career. The tension between his lived American experience and the political reality of his father's exile formed a bifurcated identity that would eventually allow him to speak to both worlds with equal authority.

The 1979 Islamic Revolution acted as the definitive pivot point in Marandi's life. At the age of thirteen, he moved with his family back to an Iran that was in the throes of radical transformation. The transition was jarring; despite his heritage, Marandi arrived in Tehran with limited proficiency in Farsi and found himself struggling to adapt to an educational system that he perceived as far more rigorous than the one he had left in Ohio. He initially attended an international school, but as the revolutionary government consolidated power and Western institutions were shuttered, he was forced to integrate into the local Iranian school system. This period of academic and linguistic struggle coincided with a rapid political awakening. Witnessing the aftermath of the revolution firsthand, Marandi began to reconcile his childhood perceptions of the United States as a "freedom-loving" nation with the realities of U.S. support for the recently ousted Shah.

This disillusionment was accelerated by the geopolitical fallout of the revolution. As the United States shifted from a patron of the Iranian state to its primary adversary, Marandi's internal identity underwent a profound realignment. He began to view the American government's actions—ranging from economic sanctions to the backing of counter-revolutionary elements—as a betrayal of the democratic ideals he had been taught in Virginia and Ohio. The "dual identity" that had once been a source of adolescent confusion became a strategic asset. He

possessed the linguistic and cultural tools to deconstruct Western narratives from within, yet his loyalty was now firmly anchored in the revolutionary project of the Islamic Republic. By the time the Iran-Iraq War broke out, the transition from an American teenager to an Iranian revolutionary was complete, setting the stage for his next chapter as a soldier and an emerging intellectual voice of the resistance.

3. The Crucible of the Iran-Iraq War and the IRGC Experience

The definitive transformation of Seyed Mohammad Marandi from a culturally American teenager into a committed defender of the Islamic Republic occurred on the battlefields of the Iran-Iraq War. Following the 1980 invasion of Iran by Saddam Hussein's forces, the fourteen-year-old Marandi found himself at the epicenter of a conflict that would define his generation. Driven by a sense of moral outrage and a desire to protect his newly reclaimed homeland, he volunteered for the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), an organization that was then evolving from a revolutionary militia into a professionalized military force. His service lasted the duration of the eight-year conflict, a period he describes not merely as a military commitment but as a profound spiritual and ideological awakening. For Marandi, the war was the ultimate manifestation of the "oppressor versus oppressed" dynamic that sits at the heart of Shi'a political thought, providing him with a visceral understanding of the sacrifices required to maintain national independence.

Marandi's combat experience was characterized by extreme hardship and exposure to the most brutal aspects of modern warfare. He served in several major offensives, most notably the 1984 Khaybar operations and the final, desperate battles at Shalamche in 1988. It was during these campaigns that he personally survived two major chemical weapons attacks. The experience of witnessing his comrades suffer and die from nerve and blister agents had a permanent impact on his worldview. This trauma was further deepened by his visit to Halabja shortly after the 1988 chemical massacre of its Kurdish population. For Marandi, these atrocities were not solely the responsibility of the Iraqi regime; he viewed them as a collective crime of the Western powers, particularly the United States and European nations, which he asserts provided the precursors and technical expertise for Saddam Hussein's chemical arsenal.

The perceived hypocrisy of the international community during this period became a central pillar of Marandi's later intellectual work. He frequently highlights the irony that the same Western nations now championing human rights and non-proliferation were the very actors that remained silent or actively complicit while Iran was subjected to weapons of mass destruction. This historical grievance is not merely a matter of the past for Marandi; it serves as the lens through which he interprets all subsequent Western interventions in the Middle East.

His time in the IRGC solidified his belief that the global order is fundamentally rigged against sovereign nations that refuse to submit to Western hegemony. This conviction has made him an uncompromising voice in the 2026 conflict, where he views current U.S. military actions as a continuation of the same imperialist patterns he first encountered in the trenches of the 1980s.

Ultimately, the Iran-Iraq War provided Marandi with a unique form of "revolutionary capital" that distinguishes him from many other academics and analysts. He does not speak about resistance from a theoretical distance; he speaks as a survivor of a war that many in the West have conveniently forgotten. His IRGC background ensures him a high degree of trust and credibility within the most influential circles of the Iranian security and intelligence establishment. This deep-rooted connection explains his prominent role in the 2026 Islamabad negotiations, where his rhetoric of defiance is backed by the lived experience of a man who has already faced the worst consequences of total war. By grounding his diplomatic and media efforts in the history of the "Sacred Defense," Marandi bridges the gap between the revolutionary past and the perilous geopolitical reality of the present.

4. Academic Specialization: Deconstructing Orientalism and Western Hegemony

Following the conclusion of the Iran-Iraq War, Seyed Mohammad Marandi transitioned from the physical battlefield to the intellectual one, enrolling at the University of Tehran to study English Literature. This choice of discipline was strategic; Marandi recognized that the West's power over the Global South was not maintained solely through military might, but through the mastery of language and the curation of cultural narratives. After completing his undergraduate and graduate degrees in Iran, he returned to the United Kingdom to pursue a PhD at the University of Birmingham. His doctoral research focused on the Romantic era, specifically examining the works of Lord Byron and his contemporaries through the lens of Orientalism. His thesis, which engaged deeply with the foundational theories of Edward Said, argued that Western literary traditions did not merely reflect the Middle East but actively constructed it as a space of "otherness" to justify imperial expansion.

Marandi's academic work is fundamentally a project of deconstruction. While he acknowledges the importance of Edward Said's critique of Orientalism, Marandi has frequently argued that Western academia and media have evolved into even more sophisticated forms of narrative control. At the University of Tehran, where he rose to the rank of Full Professor, he established himself as a leading scholar in "Counter-Orientalism." He founded the North American Studies program and served as the Dean of the Faculty of World Studies, creating a curriculum designed to analyze the United States and Europe not as universal standards of progress, but as specific geopolitical actors with distinct ideological biases. His research utilizes Michel Foucault's

theories on the nexus of power and knowledge, positing that the Western "discourse of expertise" regarding Iran is a deliberate tool of disenfranchisement.

In his lectures and published research, Marandi emphasizes the concept of "information asymmetry." He contends that Western audiences are systematically denied accurate context about Iranian society and policy because the media through which they receive information is structurally aligned with the interests of the American security state. This academic perspective serves as the bedrock for his contemporary commentary. For Marandi, the "expert" panels on Western news networks are modern iterations of the 19th-century travelers and poets he studied in Birmingham—individuals who claim to speak for the Orient while remains entirely insulated from its lived realities. By teaching his students to identify these rhetorical patterns, Marandi has cultivated a new generation of Iranian intellectuals who view Western cultural products as battlegrounds of sovereignty.

During the current 2026 crisis, this academic specialization has proven indispensable to the Iranian government's communication strategy. Marandi treats every interview and negotiation as a case study in deconstruction, often challenging the very premises of the questions posed by Western journalists. He views the 2026 war not just as a conflict over territory or nuclear enrichment, but as a "discursive war" intended to break the psychological will of the Iranian people. By applying his expertise in literary analysis to the field of international relations, he has provided the Iranian state with a sophisticated framework to resist Western soft power, arguing that the first step in physical liberation is the intellectual rejection of the hegemon's narrative.

5. The University of Tehran and the Rise of North American Studies

The University of Tehran's Faculty of World Studies serves as the institutional heartbeat of Iran's modern intellectual resistance, with the North American Studies program acting as its most strategic vanguard. Founded with the explicit goal of moving beyond traditional area studies, the program was designed under the guidance of Seyed Mohammad Marandi to provide the Iranian state with a sophisticated, "insider-out" understanding of its primary adversary. Unlike Western departments of Middle Eastern studies, which Marandi frequently critiques as being tethered to imperial interests, the North American Studies program is grounded in a "Counter-Orientalist" framework. It seeks to de-center the American narrative by subjecting U.S. political culture, media, and foreign policy to the same rigorous, often clinical scrutiny that Western scholars have historically applied to the Islamic world.

Under Marandi's leadership, the program has evolved into an intellectual training ground for a new generation of Iranian diplomats, journalists, and media surrogates. The curriculum emphasizes the deconstruction of "American Exceptionalism" and the analysis of the domestic

fissures within the U.S. political system—skills that have proven vital during the 2026 conflict. By studying the mechanics of the American media landscape and the internal logic of the "military-industrial complex," Marandi's students are equipped to identify and exploit the rhetorical vulnerabilities of Washington's messaging. This academic infrastructure ensures that when Iran engages in global narrative warfare, it does so with a deep, sociological understanding of its opponent's psyche, rather than relying on outdated slogans or purely ideological opposition.

During the 2026 war, the Faculty of World Studies has functioned as a de facto think tank for the Iranian security establishment. The program's graduates are visible across international digital platforms, providing a cohesive and articulate defense of Iranian sovereignty that mirrors Marandi's own style. This "academic vanguard" has been instrumental in framing the 2026 crisis not as a localized dispute over nuclear rights, but as a systemic challenge to a fading unipolar order. By institutionalizing this form of critical analysis within Iran's premier academic institution, Marandi has ensured that the country's resistance is not merely reactive or military in nature, but is sustained by a robust, self-replenishing intellectual core capable of contesting Western hegemony in the global marketplace of ideas.

6. The Spokesman Paradigm: Navigating Global Media Narratives

The emergence of Seyed Mohammad Marandi as the primary media surrogate for the Iranian state represents a significant evolution in the Islamic Republic's approach to public diplomacy. For decades, Iranian officials often struggled to bridge the cultural and linguistic gap between Tehran and Western audiences, frequently appearing defensive or opaque. Marandi shattered this paradigm by leveraging his native-level English fluency and his deep familiarity with Western psychological triggers. During the 2026 conflict, his presence on international news networks has become a staple of the "information war." He does not merely respond to questions; he actively deconstructs the framing of Western journalists, often turning the interview into a critique of the network's own editorial biases. This "media general" persona has allowed Iran to bypass traditional diplomatic channels and speak directly to a global public that is increasingly skeptical of mainstream Western narratives.

His rhetorical style is characterized by a blend of academic precision and revolutionary fervor. Unlike traditional spokespersons who rely on prepared scripts, Marandi utilizes a conversational but uncompromising tone that is designed to unsettle his interlocutors. He frequently employs what critics call "whataboutism," but what he defines as "geopolitical consistency," by highlighting the discrepancies between Western rhetoric on human rights and the actual conduct of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East. During the early phases of the 2026 war, when Western media outlets focused heavily on Iranian missile capabilities, Marandi shifted the focus

to the humanitarian impact of the naval blockade and the historical precedent of Western-backed chemical warfare. By doing so, he has effectively widened the discursive space, forcing Western audiences to confront the complexities of the conflict that are often flattened in standard news reporting.

Furthermore, Marandi has mastered the art of "narrative preemption." Throughout the 2026 crisis, he has utilized social media and rapid-response interviews to frame events before the official Washington narrative can take hold. When the April ceasefire was announced, Marandi was the first to frame it as a strategic retreat by the United States rather than a gesture of goodwill. This rapid-response capability has been instrumental in maintaining the morale of the "Axis of Resistance" while sowing doubt within the American political establishment. His ability to navigate the nuances of Western media while remaining steadfast in his loyalty to the Iranian state has made him an indispensable asset in Tehran's arsenal, proving that in the digital age, the ability to control the story is as vital as the ability to control the battlefield.

7. Advisory Roles in Nuclear Diplomacy and Strategic Negotiations

The transition of Seyed Mohammad Marandi from an academic observer to a formal participant in Iranian high diplomacy reflects the Islamic Republic's recognition of the need for a sophisticated, Western-educated advocate at the highest levels of negotiation. His most prominent formal role prior to the 2026 crisis was as an advisor to the Iranian nuclear negotiating team during the protracted and often contentious talks in Vienna. In this capacity, Marandi was not merely a technical advisor but a strategic architect of the Iranian negotiating position. He was instrumental in shifting the focus of the talks from technical concessions to the demand for tangible guarantees. His insistence that the United States provide legally binding assurances that it would not again unilaterally withdraw from a signed agreement became a hallmark of the Iranian stance, reflecting a deep-seated institutional skepticism born of the JCPOA's collapse during the first Trump administration.

In the crucible of the 2026 Iran-US War, Marandi's advisory role has expanded in scope and urgency. As a central member of the Iranian delegation to the Islamabad negotiations in April 2026, he has functioned as the primary interlocutor between the Supreme National Security Council and the international diplomatic community. His presence in Islamabad was a calculated signal to the West that Iran intended to negotiate with the same intellectual rigor and lack of compromise that Marandi has championed for decades. During these talks, he has been credited with synthesizing the various strategic priorities of the Iranian leadership into the now-famous 10-Point Plan. This document, which outlines Tehran's requirements for a permanent cessation of hostilities, is a direct reflection of Marandi's geopolitical philosophy, prioritizing

absolute sovereignty, the removal of all secondary sanctions, and regional military withdrawal as non-negotiable prerequisites for peace.

Marandi's advisory work is characterized by a "zero trust" approach toward Washington. He has consistently argued in internal policy circles and public forums that the U.S. uses negotiations not as a path to peace, but as a mechanism for "normalizing coercion." During the Islamabad summit, he famously characterized the American delegation's demands as a pursuit of "total surrender" disguised as diplomacy. By providing the Iranian negotiating team with a robust historical and theoretical framework to resist American pressure, Marandi has helped maintain a unified front between the country's diplomatic corps and its military leadership. His role ensures that the strategic objectives of the "Axis of Resistance" are seamlessly integrated into Iran's formal diplomatic maneuvers, making him a pivotal figure in determining whether the current ceasefire leads to a durable settlement or a return to large-scale kinetic conflict.

8. The 2026 Iran-US War: Crisis Management and Public Messaging

Immediate Response to Operation Epic Fury

The onset of the 2026 Iran-US War on February 28, 2026, presented an unprecedented challenge to the Iranian state's communication apparatus. Operation Epic Fury, characterized by nearly nine hundred strikes in the initial twelve hours, targeted not only military infrastructure but the very core of the Iranian leadership. The assassination of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei in the first wave of strikes created a potential power vacuum and a massive psychological shock to the nation. In this moment of extreme crisis, Seyed Mohammad Marandi's role shifted from academic analyst to a central pillar of the state's survival strategy. His immediate task was to project an image of continuity and defiance to a global audience that was witnessing what appeared to be the collapse of the Islamic Republic's command structure. Marandi utilized every available international platform to assert that the "Axis of Resistance" remained fully operational and that the death of leadership figures would only accelerate the mobilization of Iranian and regional forces.

Narrative Control Amidst Leadership Succession

Public messaging during the five-week kinetic phase of the war was meticulously managed to frame the U.S. and Israeli actions as illegal acts of state terrorism. Marandi was instrumental in highlighting the civilian casualties of the initial strikes, particularly the tragic hit on a girls' school in Minab, near Bandar Abbas. By focusing international attention on these "collateral" costs, he sought to undermine the moral justifications of the Trump administration's "unconditional surrender" rhetoric. He argued that the war was not a targeted campaign against a regime but a genocidal assault on the Iranian people. This focus on the humanitarian dimension was paired

with a constant stream of information regarding Iran's retaliatory capabilities. Marandi's frequent appearances on networks like Al Jazeera and RT served as a psychological counter-offensive, reassuring domestic audiences and warning regional U.S. allies that their hospitality toward American forces carried an existential risk.

The Strait of Hormuz and Sovereign Tolls

A critical component of Marandi's messaging during this period involved the strategic closure of the Strait of Hormuz. As Iran asserted control over this vital maritime artery, Marandi took the lead in explaining the new reality of "sovereign tolls." In response to President Trump's demands on Truth Social that Iran cease charging transit fees, Marandi characterized the move as a legitimate exercise of territorial rights in a state of war. He confirmed that ships were indeed being granted permission to pass only after paying fees to Iranian authorities, framing the collection—notably in Chinese yuan—as a decisive blow to the hegemony of the U.S. dollar and a practical application of the "look to the East" policy. By describing these actions as precise and measured, he countered Western attempts to paint Iran as a "rogue actor," instead presenting it as a disciplined power capable of imposing significant costs on the global economy in defense of its national security.

Messaging During the Islamabad Standoff

Throughout the crisis, Marandi's messaging was designed to manage expectations for the eventual ceasefire negotiations in Islamabad. He consistently prepared the public for a long-term struggle, even as Pakistani mediators brokered the April 8 truce. By characterizing the U.S. willingness to negotiate as a byproduct of Iranian military resilience, he ensured that the Iranian public viewed the cessation of hostilities as a tactical victory. This was vital for maintaining internal cohesion during the transition to the leadership of Mojtaba Khamenei. Following the failure of the direct talks between Vice President JD Vance and the Iranian delegation on April 12, Marandi pivoted the narrative once again. He portrayed the subsequent U.S. naval blockade as a sign of diplomatic desperation and a continuation of the "maximum pressure" failures that had initially led to the conflict, reinforcing the 10-Point Plan as the only legitimate resolution.

9. The Islamabad Negotiations and the Collapse of the April Ceasefire

The Islamabad summit of April 11–12, 2026, represented the most significant diplomatic effort to halt the spiraling violence of the Iran-US War. Hosted by Pakistan in its role as a primary mediator, the talks brought together high-level delegations, including U.S. Vice President JD Vance and an Iranian team led by Speaker of Parliament Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf and Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi. The negotiations were conducted under the shadow of a fragile, two-week ceasefire that had been brokered on April 8. Seyed Mohammad Marandi was

present in Islamabad as a senior advisor and the primary narrator for the Iranian side, providing real-time analysis that characterized the talks not as a cooperative peace effort, but as a battlefield of wills. For Marandi, the summit was a test of whether the United States was prepared to accept the "new reality" of Iranian regional dominance or if it remained committed to an outdated doctrine of regime change.

The negotiations, which lasted for a grueling twenty-one hours, ultimately foundered on irreconcilable visions of regional security. The U.S. delegation demanded an immediate and verifiable cessation of all uranium enrichment and an affirmative commitment that Tehran would never seek the tools for nuclear breakout. Conversely, the Iranian delegation, following the framework of the 10-Point Plan, insisted on the full withdrawal of U.S. combat forces from the Middle East and the payment of war reparations for the destruction caused during Operation Epic Fury. Marandi was particularly vocal in his critique of the American approach, later revealing that while the Iranian team operated with a pre-approved mandate from the leadership in Tehran, Vice President Vance appeared to be in constant contact with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Marandi used this observation to argue that the U.S. was not acting as a sovereign negotiator but was instead outsourcing its foreign policy to a third party, thereby sabotaging any chance for a localized settlement.

The collapse of the talks on April 12 triggered an immediate return to hostilities, albeit in a different form. As Vance departed Islamabad, he declared that the U.S. would pivot to a total naval blockade of the Iranian coastline, intended to "starve the machinery of war." Marandi responded by framing the failure of the talks as a moral and strategic bankruptcy on the part of Washington. He argued that the U.S. had violated the spirit of the ceasefire by continuing to support Israeli strikes in Lebanon—an area Iran considered covered by the truce—while simultaneously demanding that Iran relinquish its control over the Strait of Hormuz. By positioning the collapse of the Islamabad negotiations as a result of American duplicity, Marandi successfully transitioned the narrative from one of failed diplomacy to one of renewed and righteous resistance. This failure served to solidify the internal Iranian consensus that only the full implementation of the 10-Point Plan could ensure a permanent and honorable peace.

10. The 10-Point Plan: Iran’s Vision for a Post-American Middle East

The 10-Point Plan, submitted by the Iranian delegation during the April 2026 Islamabad negotiations, represents the most comprehensive articulation of Tehran’s strategic objectives since the 1979 Revolution. This document was not merely a list of diplomatic grievances but a blueprint for a fundamental realignment of power in the Middle East. At its core, the plan seeks to formalize the end of the unipolar era by demanding the total withdrawal of United States

combat forces from the region and the recognition of Iran as a primary security guarantor. Seyed Mohammad Marandi has been the plan's most vocal international champion, framing it as a "sovereign necessity" that corrects decades of Western-imposed instability. By shifting the focus from technical nuclear limitations to broad geopolitical concessions, the plan reflects Marandi's long-standing academic argument that regional peace is impossible as long as extra-regional powers maintain a military footprint on Iranian borders.

Core Tenets and Geopolitical Assertions

The 10-Point Plan is built upon three pillars: economic justice, military sovereignty, and international legitimacy. The economic demands include the immediate and permanent lifting of all primary and secondary U.S. sanctions, alongside the release of tens of billions of dollars in frozen assets. Most provocatively, the plan demands war reparations for the damage inflicted during Operation Epic Fury, a move Marandi describes as a vital step in holding the "aggressor" state accountable under international law. On the military front, the plan asserts Iran's right to maintain its ballistic missile program and its nuclear enrichment capabilities as a deterrent against future strikes. It also introduces a formal transit protocol for the Strait of Hormuz, which would institutionalize Iranian oversight of global energy shipments through "sovereign tolls" and coordinated passage with the IRGC.

The Post-American Security Architecture

Beyond the immediate cessation of hostilities, the 10-Point Plan outlines a vision for a post-American Middle East where regional security is managed through a collective of local actors. Marandi argues that the "Axis of Resistance" is the natural precursor to this new order, providing a model of self-sufficiency that does not rely on Western security umbrellas. The plan specifically requires the termination of all UN Security Council and IAEA resolutions against Iran, effectively resetting the country's international status to that of a "normal" power with full nuclear rights. By demanding a binding, non-aggression guarantee from Washington, the plan attempts to "lock in" these gains through a UN-ratified framework. For Marandi and the Tehran establishment, the 10-Point Plan is the final rejection of the "rules-based order," replacing it with a multipolar reality where the Global South dictates its own terms of engagement.

11. Threats and Resilience: Addressing Personal Security in High-Stakes Diplomacy

The Militarization of Academic Identity

As the primary intellectual voice of the Iranian state during the 2026 conflict, Seyed Mohammad Marandi has increasingly become a target of personal and political hostility. His transition from a traditional academic to a front-line participant in narrative warfare has exposed him to risks

that transcend the typical boundaries of scholarly debate. In the wake of Operation Epic Fury and the subsequent diplomatic stalemates, Marandi's high visibility on Western media outlets has made him a lightning rod for those seeking to silence the Iranian perspective. This hostility reached a critical peak in mid-April 2026, when reports emerged of a targeted campaign of intimidation directed at both his professional standing and his physical safety.

The April 15 Bounty and the International Response

The most severe escalation occurred around April 15, 2026, when it was widely reported that an unofficial bounty had been placed on Marandi's life. This threat, appearing on various extremist digital platforms, was presented as a response to his unapologetic defense of the Iranian military's actions and his role in the Islamabad negotiations. The situation prompted an immediate response from international human rights and legal organizations. Groups such as the Universal Justice Network issued urgent alerts, characterizing the bounty as a dangerous precedent that criminalizes academic freedom and public diplomacy. They argued that the targeting of a university professor and media commentator for his political views constitutes a grave violation of international norms, regardless of one's alignment with the state he represents.

Psychological Resilience and the Ideology of Sacrifice

For Marandi, these threats are not viewed as mere personal dangers but as a metric of his effectiveness in the global arena. Drawing on his formative experiences in the Iran-Iraq War and his survival of chemical attacks, he has exhibited a remarkable degree of psychological resilience. He has frequently dismissed the threats against him as a form of intellectual cowardice on the part of those who cannot defeat his arguments in a open debate. Within the Iranian domestic context, this pressure has only served to elevate his status, transforming him into a symbol of the nation's refusal to be intimidated. By continuing his media interventions and diplomatic advisory work despite these credible threats, Marandi reinforces the core message of the 10-Point Plan: that Iranian sovereignty is not negotiable, and that its defenders will not be silenced by the threat of violence or international ostracization.

12. Conclusion: The Legacy of Marandi in Contemporary Geopolitical Thought

The career of Seyed Mohammad Marandi represents a fundamental shift in the way the Islamic Republic of Iran engages with the global community. For decades, the Western perception of Iranian discourse was often filtered through a lens of revolutionary slogans that were easily dismissed by international audiences. Marandi, however, introduced a level of intellectual sophistication and cultural fluency that fundamentally altered this dynamic. By utilizing the tools of Western academic criticism—most notably the deconstruction of Orientalist

frameworks—he forced a more rigorous engagement with Iranian policy and ideology. His legacy is defined by his ability to translate the core tenets of the 1979 Revolution into a language that challenges the assumptions of the liberal international order, positioning Iran not as a historical anomaly, but as a vanguard for a multipolar world.

In the historical record of the 2026 Iran-US War, Marandi will likely be remembered as the most effective "narrative general" of the conflict. His work during the Islamabad negotiations and his constant media presence during Operation Epic Fury provided a cohesive intellectual structure for what might otherwise have appeared to be a purely military struggle. Through his articulation of the 10-Point Plan, he successfully moved the goalposts of international diplomacy, moving away from a narrow focus on nuclear technicalities toward a broader demand for regional sovereignty and economic justice. His insistence on war reparations and the removal of all secondary sanctions has set a new benchmark for how sovereign states in the Global South might negotiate with Western powers during times of crisis.

Ultimately, Marandi's impact extends beyond the immediate geopolitical outcomes of 2026. He has institutionalized a new form of "North American Studies" within Iran that ensures his approach will outlast his own career. By training a new generation of intellectuals to view the West through a critical, Counter-Orientalist lens, he has equipped the Iranian state with a permanent capability for sophisticated public diplomacy. Whether viewed as a staunch defender of national independence or a controversial surrogate for a revolutionary establishment, Marandi's role as an intellectual bridge between two diametrically opposed worlds has made him an indispensable figure in 21st-century political thought. His life and work underscore the reality that in the modern era, the power to define the terms of a conflict is as decisive as the power to wage it.

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